

Capital Letter:**Congress' Radio-TV Star**

By RUTH MONTGOMERY

WASHINGTON: One of the most popular pastimes on Capitol Hill is recording radio and television shows for the greater edification of the voters back home.

Both the House and Senate have their recording rooms, where for a fraction of the usual commercial costs legislators can tape the nuggets of wisdom, blarney and corn which the local stations spin as a public service.

The list of Senators and Representatives who turn out regular programs for the home folks is long and impressive, running the gamut from liberals like Hubert Humphrey, Jacob Javits and Emanuel Celler to conservatives like Karl Mundt, Olin Johnston and Bob Wilson.

The undisputed radio-TV star of Congress, however, is white-maned, ruddy-cheeked, blue-eyed Senator Kenneth Keating of New York.

Ken's spectacular popularity is due not to his looks, but to the fact that he got to the airwaves first with the mostest, and is still the bestest.

Newsmen have to cover Keating's television program every week—no other legislator can make this boast—because he invariably makes good, solid news.

He often not only out-scoops the best men, but also the big-name news panel shows with the quality of his guest stars. For a lawyer without a grain of journalistic or television training, he doesn't do too badly.

Few voters outside of his immediate constituency had even heard of Ken back in 1949, when his hometown of Rochester, N.Y., acquired its first TV station.

As the local congressman, Ken was already doing a radio program from



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Washington, but the TV owner now offered him free time to do a regular telecast. That was the birth of "Let's Look at Congress," a phenomenally successful show that soon spread to ten other TV stations and eighteen radio stations in the Empire State, including New York City itself.

This enviable exposure obviously did him no harm when he decided in 1958 to go after the vacated seat of Senator Irving S. Ives. During the dozen years since the TV show began, he has interviewed every member of President Eisenhower's cabinet except foot-in-mouth Charlie Wilson, and also such nearly-impossible-to-get officials as spy chief Allen Dulles and FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover.

He has interviewed John F. Kennedy every year except this one, and has now started on JFK's cabinet, adding Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, Labor Secretary Arthur J. Goldberg and Welfare Secretary Abraham Ribicoff to his string of VIPs. Commerce Secretary Luther Hodges is slated as his next victim.

The victims, incidentally, love it, since the GOP Senator never argues with them, gives them free rein, but grinningly tells the viewer that their views are not necessarily his own.

Keating alternates the straight-interview show with another one called, "Ask Ken Keating," which gives him a chance to answer his mail on television.

The witty Republican cons even the busiest cabinet official, ambassador or agency head into meeting him at the Senate recording room to make the telecasts. Nobody gets paid, and the tapes are furnished free to the stations which split the infinitesimal recording costs.

This seems to be one of those rare schemes where everybody gets something for nothing. No wonder Ken is the envy of Capitol Hill.

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